

The Border Cities
of the Shadowlands

by
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PROLOGUE

Brief chaos is loosed, I suppose. In silent rivulets to the sea,
I stopped and saw when the stern sickle-man appears, and
he turned the fields from copper to bronze, to crimson, to the
black ochre blood is mistaken for.

Was it the war? The scythe-holder did
not say. Was he fighting for someone?
He would not tell me. I went on my way.

Slowly to crimson embers turn. We learn this first on
battlefields. Cremated bodies are grey at first, but shone
or shimmer in the light turn scarlet if seen right. Upon
my honour I swear it true, and would I lie?
To you? I would not lie to you, I swear it true,
I swear it true. But you walk away, and so
I go on my own way.

I sprinkled on the embers white some wine. It is so that
the bodies' remnants can be found after battle or that
we know where the violet stains are markers and what
they are makers of. Sometimes though the bay
or the sea reaches with hungry fingers and they
are taken out of reach, as if they too are going
on their way . . .

Part I.

Boomslang

ROSALIE (From Eric Mackay
Yeoman, 1885-1909.)

I. Rude monuments chaos, amethyst snowy
streams, foaming liquors roar to gaping
caverns, pour to verdant
plains. In pearly mist.

This is my universe and
my frail heart its centre.

Ghostly morn-mists
flee chartless, pursuing wraiths of reality,
a luring void.

Kingdoms of wan flowers
against creeping shadows' stealth.
Violet hues burst. Violent gold chased lost
forms. Cold-plundered Earth.

II. Winged things' harmonies, haunts
of stately wold. Simple heaven descends.
I commune with miseries.

Spring's straying sickens me, my
senses to a narcotic chaos. Despair.

A withered thing
by sorrow's frost.

III. From bright palaces beyond, quiet splendour spread. Far from stations in dusky sky.

A seraph band of friends she lost.
Mourned.

Snowy angels haunt
crimson halls, lingering
from their lands
of long delight. Rapturing the world
entrancing flowers.
Sprang like lips all ruby-dye.

IV. Fade. So, fade wan flowers in dusk cold
shades. The world was fair in perished hours.
Some were stolen by angels gathering
for their paradise.

Some we nourished.
No more to shine upon
our voided eyes. Faint
frail flowers are night wind's prey. Grace rich
bournes. All your soft delight.

V. Warlike glory gleams, last red embers die.
A mist lies on twilight seas.
Bridge of dreams comes visions.

We see joy of other days. Sorrows
are past. Shapes out the best, at last.

Wandered sadly by
a shadowed sea. Darkness triumphed.
Soul was kinsman to sleeping night.

VI. Painted flower seas. Lakes like mirrors.

Wandered where beauty lies. Did angels
hear moaning of the skies? Troubled

spheres. Flickering planets flare
and dying suns emit their pallid glare.

Mists enshroud, mock.
Rumbling space forth-vomits. Worlds that
blare. Roar stagnant gulfs. Shrieking
whirlwinds their hideous flight.

VII. Bursting suns impel their crystal blaze
and snowy flames into cosmic
haze above zones

where painting lightning cast
gorgeous flames in vast displays
beyond where young
suns hold their sways, while worlds swirl
round. Drink of virgin light.

VIII. Eyes are closed to Earth's harsh tragedy.
Cold-plundered Earth. Violent gold chased
lost forms. Violet hues burst.

Kingdoms of wan flowers

against creeping shadows'
stealth. Ghostly morn-mists
flee chartless, pursuing
wraiths of reality, a luring void. This is my
universe and my frail heart its centre.

In pearly mist.

Rude monuments chaos, amethyst snowy
streams, foaming liquors roar to gaping
caverns, pour to verdant plains.

Fate called child away, and she gone
into peopled skies, home with her spirit's kin
kept hidden from her trustful eyes.
Eyes are closed to Earth's harsh tragedy.
And mine.

MARKAB

The poet Markab once said that every life
left un-lived must build inside the dead, like bubbles
rising from an acid burn,
until the corpse, suspended
like amber in the moment, must burst,
and let all those un-lived seconds out,
into the naked world.

THE TEGRIN

How do you answer the unknowable
when each road into it conceals it from
your eyes, as the Tegrin concealed her face
in those brightly plumed wings
and was shot by a hunter
thinking her beauty so unnatural
it seemed impossible anything
could harm her, anything?

THE BIRD OF FIRE

The bird of fire in her own flames seemed to expire.

The light of other eyes regarded her in dying.
Smouldering aidless and alone the phoenix fell.

Head downward, twice hurled she reached the floor
of the world. Where she fell none could tell.

Upon the farther final lip of some black shore
she crept upon, and burnished brightly into foreign
shape, as all souls do in at last learning

of their predecessors and those to come after, crying
as she cried upon the further shore. Did she die well?

How could you know since she dies more
than the sands are gathered in the desert hand, or hell
is expanded to meet each occupant born from fire to fire.

So, in the end she took her final foreign
shape, in knowing and in learning

she will come again. Instead, though in her renown
she decided upon a simpler way to be. She drowned.

CURVED COBRA CREST

Curved cobra crest, slim tiger leap
and all the worlds are gone to sleep
upon the grass of sun-dead places,
and mankind left in an echo's traces.

MOLCRYM

Let us fall away into Molcrym

and hide our vows like sins until sin itself has slept.

And then we will awaken our bonds and chains

and chain our hearts one to another,

making ourselves as close as love can make one heart

to one closed off in the litany of love.

Tukaro calls from his hills

of darkened joy, laughs huskily

like a hound in heat, watches us undress our wounds

and scars made calloused by our sins.

Tukaro, come and join us in the revels of

a heart unwound, feast on your eyes

and sight unseen; we will taste the ground

of mourning and taste the sorrow of your

heart if you will but come

and join us in our sins asleep

and slowly seeping into death.

POURED INTO THESE SKINS

We are poured into these skins, these lives

from a Creation of endless potential, until each life

is a splinter of eternity

looking into the abyss of its own self,

as if we were the shattered pieces

of a mirror gazing into the

whole which once we were a part of, though

the mirror we see is undisturbed

and flawless; we alone are broken.

THE DEATHS OF DARIUS ETHRADEL

On an oak, I penned a life, whether
the life was mine or another's,
carved to the wood I shaped each day,
 carved each line, shaped each face with lines
of wry, sad humour, or the gracious beauties
 of her face which seemed
best to me to love her best, or not at all.

I'll pen a death or deaths upon that tree,
whether mine or another's, on withered wood
corpse-grey, each leaf shorn,
 brightly showering me as a death,
or deaths we penned,
no face before me but a tree,
 lines grotesque and shapeless as mine own.

THE BALLAD OF EALHMUND

Ealhmund turned his eyes to the sun,
dead blind eyes they were which hung inwardly
down to his soul,
 dead blind eyes and a dead blind soul
as he turned his face toward the sun
to know what dead blind eyes cannot reveal,
 that the soul once wounded
can never heal
 what the wounded man wishes not to heal.

THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF ELIZA SELDOM

Old dead leaves
stain in passing.

Decade is not time,
it is country.

What she saw, who
she was, can a year tell,
can years give witness?

Every old person
looks the same to
everyone younger
than themselves.

MY LEFT EYE

When they took my left leg the reason
was clear; they'd give me another, better
than before. The same with my left arm,

severed from the shoulder blade, because
it was a time of war and a better arm was
needed with the battle near. Finally, my

left eye was gone but after this, I had to draw
the line. "Why should I give everything up?"
I asked. "Because we want to make you
strong, before you die," was the reply.

THE SNAPDRAGON TREE

In the morning a snapdragon tree was born,
and first, it bit the gardener, and then me,
with leaves sharp as obsidian
and a mouth of shark-spined teeth

it wavered indecisively, then took another bite,
rearing its head, its yellow blossomed head
and roaring like a lion arched forward
with its strike.

Now I am wary, my injuries have all been tended,
and the garden is no longer a safer place for me.
But I do not despair, no, neither
do I grieve. The snapdragon tree

is good company, as good a company as any I
could keep, and at least it is a captive audience
if an audience I should ever seek,
and it is a very good listener,

watching every movement that I make, because
if I should get too close a meal of me it'll make,
but at least it seems
to listen to what I have to say.

THE MOTH IN HER GARDEN

The moth in her garden
sleeps of thorns and roses until
the city in the distance is
burning to her pleasures
and her softly closing moans.

CITIES BUILT ON ICE AND SNOW

Cities built on ice and snow
melting into dew and shadow
must go as crimson sands must flow
 into hourglasses lost on hills
scattered like lovers and
 their worn, sad wills.

WILLOW, BROOK AND STREAM

I sat and waited till ghosts came
for me. They were pale,
their eyes seemed black, hollowed
 like shapes of skulls in dreams.

And no one thought of that, going
down to a sunless sea, waiting
by willow, brook, and stream
 for them,
of coming here and asking them to
be merciful, to give
 my daughter back to me.

But they couldn't, they explained, so
I went with them because, well because
she couldn't come with me.

THIS DARK IMAGINATION
I CANNOT FIND

When every brighter day
to come
but was,

when every truer lesson
now
is lost,

when every laughter fed
upon
is gone

and these thoughts once
so glamorous
stoop to shadow

this dark imagination
I cannot find
as ours.

REVEALS

Yet reveals more than it conceals

in the darkness,
oh, the darkness

all invisible ahead, the black elephant sale,

tusks all bloodied of a reason
yet to gore as none prevails.

TEA LEAVES

You'd never waste tea leaves
in the old days. You'd scour them into
stoves to clean the ashes
up, and afterward
the scent of tea would permeate the air like
some mild perfume or incense or
feeling of nostalgia though we

never really knew why. Suddenly
there would be this thought of milkweed all
at once and the thought
of fields that
would go on forever, or maybe a remembrance
of a girl you used to know. What else
will bring her back to me?

AMYALIS

Amyala in Amyalis named the
city after her and the mountain
and the valley; everything
she named as hers.

MR. ARGYRIS BATHRIC

The fog pitched forward drunkenly,
blanketed the nameless city,
Mr. Argyris Bathric like a brother
to the idiots lurched thru

the half-starved streets praying
for a night's relief, a single sleep
to last a thousand years, but
all he gets like everyone is a

labyrinth of streets he can't recall,
a few drops of sunlight in a black
glass sea, and a few times way

in the middle of the night when his
dreams almost fall asleep, and dream.

THE UPLIFTING CRY

The uplifting cry of her
when the son died on
the river as I heard the
sound so like a winter beast
 or burning thorn
 smouldering fire
of her cry as I
listened, laughing, still.

AN ASH-GIRL

An ash-girl came to me
weeping dust for tears. Everything
was ruined there,
 city melted into the sea
dissolving slowly under
 its own weight,
 streets upturned and twisted
like threads caught
from spider webs
 by passing night-carved wings.
I held her, dissolved in her
embrace. She held me,
 dissolved like the city
 in the sea, but her tears
still linger for she, the city, and for me.

THE FOUR ISLANDS

We saw isles, knew stories true,
and yes, I know the map a lie, know
arctic shores are nothing like I described,
but there they were, four
 islands like titans about us roaming,
great sea-green surfs of moss and ice,
hoary-headed mountains glaring
 ominously down, at us. And
 cry of small voices we couldn't
understand, the whirlpool *caught* and I saw
the teeth of the world bearing down on me.

 You don't have to believe, wreckage
will not be found, but I saw those places
again in the jottings of a map and looking down
at the date saw it was long ago. And no, I will
not go there again to prove
 if I am right or prove I am wrong for
if the upper northern world has no such isles
nor great teeth of stone nor storm nor
 glaring down of giants held fast in the
form of mountains then where *was I*, and where
have my brave men gone where no world was
 like the world that I described?

BASILISK

Spiderlings, silver threads dangling
like an inverted cathedral in miniature
from out my hand.

Of me
what do they think, those glass-bodied
children of an absent mother? Am I
a basilisk, turn

their glass bodies to stone, rupture
them as scales along cement, break
jewel-eyes to jagged spires of bone?
If they think

of me at all they might
think of me as that, or nothing
but what they crawl upon,

with sun a lamp overhead,
night nothing but me turning off the
lamp and finally going indoors.

THE FIELDS

At death I imagine heaven to be this,
that all the dead clothe themselves
in new flesh.

Some will become
green seas of grass, infinite
emerald oceans curling to wine-perfume
winds, feeling neither ice nor heat,
nor suffering.

Others will be caterpillars,
jewel-bright gold, silver-white,
who will feast on the bodies
of the sinuously coiling dead.
This is my idea
of a final paradise.

One might imagine this hell,
bodies consumed or desiring to
consume. But no. For the slow centuries
would be a torture of their own, an
unchanging world
more hell than fire or storm.

Hell is not pain nor some ravenous
worm nor grass suspended taunt along some
plain. Hell is to be unchanged, alone.

SPIDER SONG

In the garden of bones
they began the song.
The threads, the crystalline
orchards of threads resonated
with each step, and out

of each step form takes form.
From this mankind began, out
of the songs the spiders made.

In the moonstone country
of their kind, they remain,
letting the threads cool.

And some slow cancerous
wisdom ebbs from us to know
when their song ends we cease

and in the beginning of
another song will come another
world and race and form,
and a shore and grass sea
from which another sun will rise,
and come to be.

OUT OF THE MYSTERIOUS PLANET

In labyrinths weaving
lengthwise between stars
mute-fly girls cluster
about glass-black
shuddering walls. Wendigos
raise eyes to spectacles invisible
to living souls.

Slow decay across creation,
moth giving up her burial shroud.
Applause.

Spider crosses waters
of a sea coloured no tongue
can claim nor eye describe.

She neither looks
up nor notices any except a mute-fly
perched on a piece of driftwood . . .
devoured without even
the hint of a weeping sound.

TWENTY THOUSAND ISLANDS

Twenty thousand islands in a sea of mist
and I on one and you upon another and if
I searched thru every smaller world
and found you not it'd be the same as if
we both upon the same isle dwelled and
you talked not once to me.

BROTHER TO STORMS

The beggar king is standing in their land.
They are watching
him. Lions lengthened into men. The
beggar, knowing
this thru grassland walks, himself the
only thing not a cat.

 He bends down, peering
in the bronze-touched grass, writhing
 in the earth a worm, but no,
it is a jaguar reduced to black spots,
 limbless, eyeless, face still
of a cat no larger than a worm might
have been, if any worms
were here. But no worms are here.

 They pounce, he letting them.
For a moment Death crouches near. Then
 the brother to storms walks
on, leaving them in their ruin,
 barely shedding a single tear.

WE'RE LIKE AN OLD SONG

 We're like an old song, you and I,
misused by memory, misshapen in separate
ways, broken, bleeding, and bond irrevocably,
 as if we were old lovers
one to another, twisted on
desires we did not make.

MEDUSA'S COIL

No tear is shed to walk
the labyrinth,
 or regard Medusa's coil.
She is there, one of legion,
serpent-nude
walking with minotaurs
or glaistigs, communing with
 older things.

 All world is labyrinth,
all city a winding sheet.
You seek her out in time
 to spare yourself of
where no water is, turning
yourself to stone. But I am
 only turning into clay.

WHERE THE HORSES OF FAHLIA RUN

 Where the horses of Fahlia run
to the gates of Gehida they come,
 thru the dream and the
 madness of dreaming
to the heart of a void
without measure, when the sun
 has slipped her chain and to the pool
of the night does she bathe,
 till the horses of Fahlia
shall run no more
 and only their shadows remain.

THE BLACK DREAM

A man thinks he wakes up. He had a dream in which
was an insect. Now he is. Struggling to move he tries
to turn onto his stomach. Rounded body struggles.

He succeeds. Scratches at door. He tries to open it.
Sister hears. Father and mother hear. They
open it. They see him. They recoil.

Eventually, they forget him. Eventually, they believe
he is not . . . family. He shrinks down, killed
underfoot by one of them. Spends days in his room dying.

But he never knew, not once. He had wings.
Had he wished he could fly. All this is a dream.
He awakens. He is an insect. He goes not

to the door. To the window he goes. He opens
it. He spreads his wings. He takes to the air. In the
real *he flies . . .*

THE DREAMS HELD IN NO MAN'S LAND

Sleep beneath the obliterated stones
in unmeasurable graves and all the dead
a monument and legacy like the black waves
of artillery shouting admonitions in
no man's land, or caves where the demons
drink our miseries and pray.

With occult commands the burning lairs
lay low and are forgotten, to be replaced by
cities of sorrows.

With dark commands man is rendered
to the burrows like hare or vermin
or rats asleep in sepulchers.

Finding joy in the lone wild like destruction's
only child those to come after will not remember
sirs or kings, or generals,
but only
the savage-styled ramblings of misheard
commands and orders to go over the top,
into no man's land.

But since all is now black caves
or dark chambers like cities on the moon, or waves
of night descending to waves, who is left to be saved?

AUTOPSY

Tended too late by men with duelling
scars, reclining on a pristine mirror
reclined upon, you are a brief remnant
of a fragile world.

They reach shallow fingers thru snakes
of intestines wrapped about their hands,
peel back your bladder's skin
and there is your

urine like a yellow wine while the
subtle bloating along your skin reveals
ten trillion mouths are making you their
silent feast, but not in mourning
or praise or judgement.

The doctors then crack open the skull.
There beneath is a splinter of your love
for the life you had.

INSTEAD OF WATER, FIRE

We expect a sea to be a sea
and the rivers to be rivers but instead
they blaze, they burn.

I expected you to love me
and you turn away, always away.
I haven't strength to stay
anymore. Whatever we were
is no more, or never was. Rivers
are no more. But instead of waters, war.

FORGOTTEN CHILD UNFORGOTTEN

Forgotten child unforgotten.

Lost on grasses.

Let me go.

Life uncoils backward.

Let me go.

Hope unveils herself.

Death clothes

herself. Let me go.

Smooth moonstone women.

Memories of never-were.

I weep alone.

Let me go. Death

is many. Forgotten
children unforgotten. Lovely
malachite lover.

Let me go.

SILENCED IN THEIR DREAD

So, like a serpent.

Falls, so like a serpent.

She moans so sinuously.

Moans in waters bloodied.

Feasts upon black tears.

Where shadows whimpering die.

Like the children starved.

So, like night herself. Does the
woman bathe? In all those

raven-slender cries. Swiftly
as crows nesting. Their deaths
held between walls.

Riotous and darkly pure.

Of one meaning pure.

That they were fed.

Upon by her fed.

Silenced in their dread.

SHADELESS BOUGHS

Shadeless boughs flamed over me
and all the fires a sunless tree
burnished cold as ashes stained when
flame shall die and come again
and heaven become an empty name.

Life is spent upon the shore
shaded by trees of ice and flame
like her birthplace
self-born once more.

WHOSE TIDES

Whose tides to some remoter moon flow
in a fadeless afternoon? Whose tides are
there resting as a hound before her far
master's gaze? Whose tides rise and are
stilled in the moon's shade? So
now you know, that you do not
know of what I speak. You forgot
I suppose the eloquent words of war go
twice as far but are half as broad.
The countries ruined which we trod
were broken by words as these, marred
by thoughts of cool water, and the flow
of tides, as if we were tides of water not
soldiers broken by those who of us forgot.

THE PEOPLE (Inspired by the
writings of Georg Heym.)

Great fires they sweep into night.
Suicides walk abroad these times.
The streets are littered with corpses
like broken moths.

Night holds
her dominion
dying here.

The people
watch the ships rotting along the
ocean's road. They stop. They stare.

They do not scream.
The city roars like a beast in heat.
Aslant the shadows watch as
we make love.

Upon the
great ocean
of thorns

the hordes of
suicides recline, lusting after wounds
that will not heal. The selves now
lost they will not come
again. The dead awake and pluck
from their eyes a leaden sleep, of the
dreams they had
when they were alive.

SCARLET BANNERS

Scarlet banners in the dawn
flutter like broken wings gone
across fields of blackened song
cast across cities of bone.

Lovers cut their feet passing there,
demons dream of unseen things,
faceless children clutch their wings,
ravens howl and the wind sings.

Banners are broken now, alone,
we scattering ran after that moan
of dark memories won or thrown
or lost neath eyes of the dawn.

Eden in winter is a blackened thing
where lovers scream, carried where
prayers are lost, battle done, where
broken banners fly scarlet into dawn,
left unaware.

THE DOOMSDAY MEN

It is a very private holocaust to die.
You see on railway platforms
condemned ones
waiting there, bayonets slung by
shoulders of boys falling in line by lie
soon they will return, having won.

Chalice of her body lying there
I intimately recall, who I shunned
to carry on to my ending days
as if the moth I was to fire prays
a perfect sum in this,
walking thru Verdun.

Wounds against the blood
I felt when I burned like suns
burn thru night, then saw good
and ill cast to oblivion, the good
sentenced to fire's cold run.
Beneath the roots, our bodies lie.

THE SILENT ISLE

The island speaks not nor sings nor
is sound her footfalls found upon it.
Each tree and leaf is still. Wings
do not rustle against wind's cry.
Nothing is heard.

Briefest of uncharted stars shone
blister at black stillness like a sea
gone,
swallowed in brief decay gone
backward into night. By dawn

all is stiller, a scene for none to see.
Mourning after still it remains undone
for there was never a bright song to be
upon the isle of a dead girl's memory.

SALOME

Between sunset and shadow, she lies.
Wearing the mask of every destiny.
We are as statues without cause.
Moving across this path, no other.
While she moves with us, becomes.

She dances across shadow and sun.
Her limbs graceful as a pale deer.
Her mouth smiles as darkness does.
Our lives sea foam in ophidian seas.
She wears the masks of us, and flies.

THE DOROMOR EMPATHY POLICE

The dark full of the street and the sky
neath a country of assassins
waiting by the homes of their
prey there stand beside them or lie
invisible guardians bleeding within
their minds the copper sins of mere
compassion till each bland murderer
is subdued, till they go wandering on
thru fields unspoken of till dawn
throws back her maned head and
 they are gone. Sir,
 you erred.

THE TURNING PATH

Upon the turning path the lovers came.
As they came each path grew diverged till
there were not two but multitude become
and each divergent road new life until
only death a similarity for each: even then
death a now new creature born often.

At times he never met nor she the same.
At times they stayed forever and ever until
upon the turning path, the lovers came.
As they came each path grew diverged till
looking back wondered who they had been.
Only death a similarity for each: even then.

Never always kissed him, nor he her. Still.

Seen from outside loved the other. Shame.
As they came each path grew diverged till
upon the turning path the lovers came
till the end of time had run its course again.
Death a now new creature born often.

EXPERIMENT IN BLUE

Language is an experiment in blue.
Colour begins as word, then becomes.
Thought begins after word is come.

There is no me, no you.

We are the hollowed sum
of thoughts we have, true sum
written by not being written. Who
can understand? Do not know if
any can, being confined by gift

language brings. All is true
or nothing is, for these symbols
here are fragments coloured whole
by your mind only. It's only you.

You are only you.

THE BLACK JUNGLES

Black jungles glisten. On crimson
world. Gardens of scarlet. For
scarlet kings. On thrones
scarlet diseased. Single grey shadow
of bronze. Unseen by them.

Wasplike iridescent kings.
Watching as the sky bleeds.
And world dissolves away. Spider
webs glisten. The prey released.

Suddenly all have wings.
Gardens are empty. Childhood has
ended. Stars but glisten.
Worlds but sing. Kings become
chrysalis. Awakened in
birth. Scatter themselves forever.
Leave their children. Far
behind them. Amid black
gardens. Imprisoned as amber.
Imprisons a wasp. As all begins anew.
Creation revolves about. Itself again.

CATERPILLAR II.

On the branch. Man saw
caterpillar. Writhing piece
of green. Staring upward
with black eyes.

A face just like his own.

Later it grew wings.

Buried self, backwards.

Hung body on a black tree.

It faded. So faded the man.

Another came. A watcher
staring too.

He glancing down.

To the branch. Caterpillar
crawled upon. Staring at
himself with black eyes. And
a face just like his own.

THE BALLAD OF GIRL ANDERSON

Girl Anderson is dead you know,
haven't you heard? She fled like a bird
and is dead you know. You haven't
heard? Oh. Well, she is dead today
and buried tomorrow. Who was she?

Why just a child taken at birth
to unbirth, her single moment of dreaming
the entire world we are living in,
for what it's worth.

WAX PEOPLE,
PAPER PEOPLE

Gurdendira is a woman all of
paper terrified by even a drop
of water's rain.

And in the garden candle-lit
Gamalian sits, and he a man
of wax afraid,

oh, so afraid to burn and melt
away. It is always thus I guess,
that lovers find
excuses to stay away.

THE SONG OF LAMONT BASIDRUL

There are lands where the snow as a whispering
dawn crawls through men's souls, freezing them all
for the hounds of the wind to rend and devour
as the sun to the snow is devoured.

There are lands when the night
raped of her voice stumbles through twilights
made by no hand, stumbles as wolves in
the madness of hunger, stalking as sleep
eyes burned full awake
by hours unused in the grim morning's light
or desires unspent neath the sun's vicious
sight, made as a god's eye to blaze and to
hide the true nature of man for a time.

SCAR

When we fell out of love,
she still clinging thus,
I noticed a scar along her
cheek (of course,) from where
her own grief came forth.

On sidewalks, you'll find
rage a tear-stained wound
or loneliness a raven's
birthmark along an arm.
As for her scar, it's now gone.

Her new lover tore it away,
out of mind. As for mine . . .

I AM THE ONE I'M WAITING FOR

Death-heavy darkness on his throne
still sleeps alone. I still sleep alone.

I will forever be that lone
figure waiting for death to come
knowing life's slow sum
means I am the one I'm waiting for.
I will wait and I will wait forever
for none will lift me from my throne.

MERMAIDS SINGING

In the bay the mermaids
are singing softly and sure and slow,
and sirens with them go, and the
 leviathan deep below.

The eye of the leviathan is
broader than the world, translucent
and pale as a sea inside a sea, and
upward it gleams as
the mermaids dream and when they
 sing it screams.

Never mistake the song for the
 meaning behind it child
for in the deep dark wild of the ocean
what we long for they demean.

THE WHITE MOOSE

He shot the white moose.
 Didn't die.
Instead, it crawled wounded
into his memories.

It is a rarity, a beast
as this. Should have faded
 away.
Instead, it crawled wounded
in his memories to stay.

What point the hunter who
never got his prey?
 Didn't die.

Followed his aim,
Pressed gun to his temple.
Shot the white moose.

ZYADAR'S CONFESSION

Passion runs through veins
accustomed to the needle's mark,
the poison's pain. I watch the girls
from my dirty corner of an
unwashed frame, gaze at their
lovely breasts, their laughing
faces marred by a cold, cold fire
that has no flame and makes of them
hollow as my veins, scurrying from
room to room, arrayed in all the
finery their simple minds could
make, until the poison in my veins
bleeds blue and death's cold fire burns
me whole, but leaves my sleeping eyes
awake, to watch them eternally in
all their empty finery, cold as the frost's
sweet kiss upon my brow.

STILL HAPPENS

Still happens at times, people
becoming grotesque echoes of
themselves,

 hands extending until
they take on brunt coarseness
of black

 spiders, heads blooming
like rotted flower bulbs collapsing
over bodies crudely because
skulls have grown

 so big they can no longer
be supported by a thread-thin
neck. Still happens

 sometimes,
nightmares crawling and walking
the streets like other men . . .

TWO POEMS ON POETRY

*1) Poetry is above all a labyrinth. Each word
is both rose and vine, interlaced with each
thought in some unknown design.*

*2) Poems are lines of thread woven in new
fashions, meant to be taken up by others
and broken in whatever ways they will.*

Part II.

Grootslang

IN THE DAWN

In the dawn of the crimson hour
I saw a woman in a crystal flower
 along a serpent path,
 along a serpent's wrath.

There upon the moor, I took the
flower and saw a door,
entering in felt an ecstasy,
 felt a sin,
 but I was welcomed in.

 Along a serpent path,
 along a serpent's wrath
in the scarlet sunset haze
of the sunset scarlet maze
was a hunter of the hunting place,
 one of the monolithic race,

 a serpent's spoken scales ablaze
as a knight in armour gold
sought kill the ancient rival old
 in the sunset sleeping haze
but neither yielded in shadowland,

clutched as lovers, hand in hand
along a serpent path,
 along a serpent's wrath
 as a knight in armour gold,
a serpent's spoken scales ablaze,
a hunter in the hunting place,

clutched as lovers, hand in hand,

each the other in shadowland.

While in the dawn of
another crimson hour I saw the
shattering of the crystal
flower and we two stood upon
the moors, but neither held the
other's sunset scarlet hand.

THE GINGER CAT AND THE CANDY GIRL

The ginger cat and the candy girl
came to the autumn bone town.
The ghost train which brought them
whistled away without a sound.

Beside the serpent-shrouded seas,
coral cutting dry seabeds
rested the long bled
fingerprints of the dead
embedded like the roots of trees.
On distant hill, the scarecrow hung,
his broken eyes but rags run
dry cast gazing in a
summer-shrouded sky . . .

THE WHITE FINGERS OF THE EARTH

Hanging there upon the cliffs,
 between the ocean and the sky,
the white fingers of the earth,
 solitary towers left behind
before our ancestors' footsteps
 touched the soil ages gone,
not to return, and there we were
 waiting in the place between
a heaven and the ground that
 could have been our brothers,
our fathers or our executioner
 if in a moment's time
we slipped from these white
 fingers of earth to the earth below,
and beneath the ground a fire
 grows which the priests call hell
but I have never seen it nor
 the heavens they describe,
but only the cliffs I cling to,
 and the life I claim as mine.

MAXENTIUS

Maxentius life loved
and roses,
 thorns to pierce,
flowers to kiss,
a taste of what has
come and gone
 like empires
married to emptiness and dust

as he closes his hands
line worn
 with ages
over the sky,
as his hands close over the ground
and take up the roses of memory
sharp thorned,
 steel-spined
 and bright as the days now gone,
into the lands of the moon,
 out of the lands of the sun.

THE MARTIAN TREE REVISITED

Its leaves an obsidian alkahest
and up it rises into the atmosphere,
like a burning crimson finger
from the sands below, composed

of vines which whip like savage
fangs and those leaves, acidic, broad
and poisonous, leaving traces of

their savageries in the flesh of the
thinning sky. And I have seen
this lone thing rising upward, ever
upward, like a last gasp of a life

before reaching the void and falling
back, being devoured by its own
leaves, an acidic sorrowing of days.

ON SLOAN'S URANIA

It was a butterfly that died out in 1908,
dark green lined wings, slender body, almost
too beautiful to imagine laying, now in some
collector's glass case or a museum's box
beside other lesser strains like pieces of
a jeweller's art who hadn't bothered to give
his piece a proper, perfect name.

It lived in Jamaica and if I had lived then
I could have travelled to the farthest southern
shore and seen the bones of the Ona people
lying in Tierra Del Fuego, for they had been
wiped out and almost exterminated in 1903,
mostly bones between the lives of few
survivors left, leading to a final sharp
decline from one to none in 1974.

Perhaps someday the museums will be
museums to others, creatures who will dwarf
the tender mercies of leaving lives in boxes
or glass cases or pinned to walls, some great
thing who will barely notice all the efforts
done to preserve the dead when all are dead
and gone save the titans standing at the end
of time, crushing all things underfoot without
ever noticing they dared commit a crime.

LUCIFER

Lucifer upon his father's throne
defiled it, hunted the souls of men
but found no soul within,
 only to hold a harvest of the wind,
only to hold destruction in his grasp;
why even the worms are better
 off than him, who count it wisdom
to lay within the earth, nor long for
heaven's touch which can never save,
 or they against its touch dare win.

SCALPEL LYING ON MY TABLE

Scalpel lying on my table,
rosewood handled, crafted so
subtly seems impossible this
was used to amputate my leg.

Had it kept, improved it,
replaced metal handle with
one of wood, sharpened blade,
covered it with thin layering
 of gold-pressed leaf.

Let no one say I'd keep a thing
not lovely in its way.

 Yet every lovely thing,
yes, even life, was once a scalpel,
hard and cruel and grey.

NOR THE YEARS CONDEMN

Nor the years condemn the houses
by the sea, the reluctant widow,
the fool of the family. The years
are no judge of themselves. Only we.

It is ours to assign judgement our
days, to reveal or revel in the broken
house by the storm-tossed sea, or the
woman waiting for her lover while

her husband is being buried, or the
boy watching all, oblivious of the cliff
upon which he stands, as all falls,
himself upon the shore or on the sand.

DEAD MARTIAN CITY

Out on the sands lies the city
stone-decayed, brittle as glass.
My men want it, either to

destroy or claim because either
way it will ease their minds
to empty the ghosts of their

ties to this world. We marched
through the gates which crimson
shone and as we passed all fear

dissolved, as did our flesh one
by one and we each became
brittle as glass, stone-decayed.

THE MIMICRY

In my dream, people live inside the
moon, in a jungle paradise, and they
know of me as I know of them.

There is a woman there who is me
as I am her here, and the cities of Earth
are no less strange than the jewelled and

golden cities of the moon. If she came
here or I went there our worlds would
dissolve in flight like gossamer

strands bundled together and cast
against the flood. Only if I am here and
she is there are our worlds safe and so by

our never meeting are we never again apart.

THE PLUMED VOICE

Of proud heaven came the plumed voice.
Dewdrops then, and roses and roof-trees
descending out of the ether of space.
The voice took shape, becoming man,
woman, both, all, neither. In the two
blind countries of this orphan isle, this isle
adrift in the country of the sun the voice took
the shape of all things, saying nothing at all,
until its final, first word. Of what that word
was none know. All life has spent itself
on trying to decipher the origin and meaning
of that first, all-encompassing word.

WORLD'S EDGE IN CRIMSON

At the world's edge the sun was blood, blood red or
black I could not tell. Crabs battled on the beach, all for
the right to be the last. The beach was of glass, more
shard than sand melted from the furnace of the air.
I watched. Of man, nothing was left. I was for
all intents alone. I wept. I sang. I was. I died.

In this black dream, my bones drifted on, my own stare
became meteors decayed which left behind their
own parasites in my corrupted blood, those marred
damnations that had once plagued mankind. They tried
then to build cities, and establish their own lands for
themselves, neath a sun black or blood red. In the air

one heard then dragonflies whisper songs weeping of
past greatness gone, man but a memory unloved.
I woke. I wept. I was. Heard ice-white wings above.

THE PLAGUE PERSONIFIED

She is the plague personified.

By this, I do not mean she
is unpleasant or unkind. She
I simply mean is love denied.

In cold black rooms we
wait, all of us, she and he
and they as outside the wide
world crouches, waiting.

What it is waiting for I do not
know. I know only we caught
are like winds against wings
unfought.

BUILDING A CITADEL

Building a citadel upon the upper air
leaving ulexite splendour upon the naked grass,
a wayward abomination passing there, last
left lingering alone, howling her black refrain,
striding on feet of sand sans pain
reaching upward to a citadel of the upper air.

Child of the morning come, let fall oblivion
to a drowning pool. Let white virgins come, white
snow ages over us dying ones as shrouds of night
while above the black air drowns in amber.

Yesterday we will change forever.
Today is but all the sorrows we are given.

Who was I before, what of me remains?
All life drowns to a cup of amber
left lingering alone, howling his white disdain.
Yesterday we will change forever.

LIFE IN THE BLACK SUN

The night sea beckons all
now, black silver held in
Time's black hand.

Women whose bodies are
vines and women whose
flesh are spiders'

flesh, they come, come for
me to take me into the night
sea garden of ulexite
splendour where drowned

the once warm sun, now
a bitter ember lost.

I here before a parliament
of obsidian things, coral
singing shadows
or spinning out further the
obsidian bodies of themselves,

I forced to see the
essence of myself, dark mirror
given flesh, I become dark
mirror. I perish reborn

in another self to wear.
There are no shadows in
the dark lands here.

THE SUN HAD RISEN

The sun had risen against backward
hills, forest behind and before
shimmered, blazed, and burned,
the man
gazing with outstretched hands
looking down at the river, and began.

Moments slowed, remembering
old friends gone, even her
glittering like sunset when she walked.
All gone.

Fingers knotted up with age.
World receded. Childhood
flooded back. Taste of first apple,
taste of first wine, taste of first love.
Finally silence.
Fished by a river without fish in it.
Nothing more said, needed to
be said. Pistol, a cartridge spent.
Didn't walk home again.

THE CROWS HAVE NO KING

Crows have no king I am told, even among
the gravestones and the cemeteries there is
the hint of a brotherhood,
as black wings carry winter's harbinger
and black voices carry winter's curse.
Their crooked speech among the dead
is sympathy to me you know, for it's
better to make the world fit for slaves
and winter's endless sleep than
many summers all men cannot enjoy.

THE OCEAN MIGHT BE

The ocean might be older than the star.
The drops of dew are older than we are,
are so much so, created and destroyed

and we are but little flickering frames
which the ocean regards in same. A void
the river saw which existed before names
or words were invented yet. Before star

or sun she is all and about this mute scar
wisdom, I let slip the harassed wings of my
displeasure. Consider it friend, soft sigh

of an ocean whose progeny we are and yet
the beast Silence never stops to consider us,
cannot remember us or ever even *ever* forget,

yet the waters do not stir nor cry
nor even dream, while you and I . . .

CHILDREN OF THE MOON AND SUN

Summer in winter then.
Summer in spring.
An hour of a summer day
was captured and caught
mothlike along the seasons,
along the circular labyrinth
without reason, cupped
in the hands of the children
 of the moon and sun.
Careful. Sometimes when
the warmth extends it carries
you with it, until you are
passing autumn streams
 of red leaves overhead
holding the seconds of a
summer suicidally hot like
prayer beads distended from
out the hollow of your hand.

THE SCORPION EATS HER YOUNG

The scorpion eats her
young, the spider hers.
Our nations devour
ours, and a poet words.

TAMMUZ

In those stately pleasure gardens
rounded are by walls of sapphire
and if one could gaze into the fire
they would see Tammuz, last of men
reclining in oblivion and his desires
spent, lost, or eaten thru upon pyres
of death. And there sits the woman

of the shrouds but watching him as
he passes into oblivion's sleep again.
Finally, shall come another man,
another woman and then as always
shall the cycle return round and then
become again the same, for all then
is as all will be, and then we pass . . .

THE TYBURN TREE

We three walked to the Tyburn Tree,
month of April seething, singing,
neath stern-chaser winds unfeeling,
we three walked to the Tyburn Tree.

Wire-worm shadows cleaved
the air, our fingers brushing there
beneath wire-worm shadows.

Stone horse in meadow, unseeing,
unbeing. Stone pine in cupped
hand of shadows spent, in shadow
lands neath stern-chaser winds
and a sky colour of Miranda's face

in winter.

We three walked to the Tyburn
Tree without fate or memory,
without love, love for her thrown
head adorned with a wire-worm
crown before we three buried her
in murk-worn waters, where
the demons passing stare.

Then I drew lots, worse fate to
bear for I was as yet unchosen.
Then we two walked down
from the Tyburn Tree,
each remembering Miranda's
winter-coloured hair, each
weeping as we went.
And he was left.

So, he is hanging there, still
hanging there, waiting for us
tomorrow to come to the
Tyburn Tree twice more,
when there will be no more him,
or no more of me.

THE SINGED MOSSES CURLING HERE

1) The singed mosses curling here,
white or crimson or cold blue;
whatever its native un-sunned hue,
beside broom-shaded banks
 of golden green
crumbled to sparkling dust
her birthplace when self-born again,
 my lover as yet unseen.

2) With golden lip and glistening bell
the greensward-grown grey with mire
lays on the grassy-bosomed sod
a hundred-sunned phoenix her rich pyre
 burnt up with aromatic fire!

3) No melody beneath the moon
to learn an empyrean rhyme. With
butterfly path glean out some broken
syllables, mourned by the desert
 where she dies,
 glassing the great sun in her eye!

4) Finding joy in the lone wild
like desolation's only child,
that in the sunburnt, silent air
builds his crumbling castles there,
 but who builds and plays
 with his despair?
 With *my* despair?

SUMMER-REST

Summer-rest from earth riot,
crisp as the unshorn desert hay
the rough sands rolling
 gold on the strands
round the sea-monarch
a cataract white of smoke
and snow where lay the lands
 we do not go.

With amber tears in sun
green vales swift as a star
falls thru the night,
 swift as a sunshot
dart of light still lingers the
lands we do not go.

With red scent chalice
the air cloud-broad his
sun-eclipsing shade rose the
sun-scorner from earth's shore
 I woke by the phoenix
tree with all others unlike me,
living lives I do not know
 in the lands I do
 not *wish* to go.

THE THUNDER-BIRD

Blown from old ocean's world-broad well
where the red hour of morn's begun
I heard the cliff-scream of the thunder-bird
and the rushing of his forest-wings
above the deathless daughter of the sun
while slowly to crimson embers turn
 the beauties of the brightsome one.

Yet still her brinded neck high-arched in air
faded there, warm as a prayer in paradise
while I only heard in measure meet
the pulses of the fountain beat as the
thunder-bird his wings like scales of sleet
would burnish sky to grey undreaming,
 till from this life I am leaving,
 into the countries of the air.

THE ENSHROUDED SUN

As the enshrouded sun
glances to me from its hollow sky,
I upon the ocean, ocean a broken
mirror seems like a blackened
 once remembered dream.

O what sweeter, finer
pleasure then this wild, unruly
measure when the demons
are together
 thirsting for more than
water brings in rich autumn's
 purple weather.

THAT SWAM THIS SHALLOW SALT

This inward rage,
 this eating flame, fiery dust my frame,
 my dragon soul from frost-bound waterfalls
 that hang in waves the
 mountain walls the deep deluge
 his wide channels wore thru each green
 and gateless door.
 Then we trod by the fallen in hell
 and lie drowned there still
 beside the amber-molten sea.

Where Eden high with terraced
stairs that climb the sky toward
a reptilious Nile, as shades that pass
 silent and soft over fields of grass
 his solitary wave beside.
There the hundred-gated city
with gryphoned arch and avenue
 for giants,
wide those streaming gates of war
ran once with many a conqueror,
horseman and chariot and archer's bolt
 to the sound of the dry serpent
 blazoning round
back to Eden and innocence unfound.

WHERE SALT OCEAN

Where salt ocean has his fresh headspring
and snowy curls upon the Blue King,
broad earth the lunar mountains fling
 to those strange lands where
 the desert breeze with pinion grey
 rustled along the leafless sand
all my ashy ambition is now to flame.
Like veins in stone red grew the blood
 in my cold frame,
their wild mercy borne piecemeal by those
white coursers torn that shook their manes
of me, foam high.

 This rises from my sea-grave I owe
 or burn in my own sighs
where the shadows of the moon
her towered head above the spheres recites
a Memnonian rhyme.

THE MOTH PEOPLE

The moth people skim sky,
membranous wings colour
of silk in winter.

 You see them
sometimes flittering on
wind never looking down
at you, like lovers
 you've never had.

In time the mountains will
wear away, like steps in sand,
and afterwards no one
 will say they could ever
go where the moth people stand.
Flight will just be the
 illusion of passing away.

THE RIVER

The river, emerald glinting, forest azure,
copper staining neath a sun shadow coloured of
and on the river the barque is sailing, cooling,

occupied by blunt exiles whose skin is thunder
singing speech, the way cicadas do in summer,
sheltered by a river black cobra overarching,

inverting sky, sea, forest, shade all asunder
till one is standing on the underside only
realizing too late the way river flows, flowing,

flowering, leaving all else to slowly wander

into the world we did not make, cannot save,
sheltered by a river black cobra overarching.

ON THE SCORPION'S TAIL

On the scorpion's tail, looking to the stars,
we are lifted on a pyre brighter
than the scar

which runs across the mouth
of the sun

as we climb into heaven
on a spear, climb into the country
of God

which is near, but God
is not there and the void
only beckons

and the scorpion strikes but his tail
has no sting, and we are out on the wing
with no prayers
and no grace

as below stands the earth,
silent and waiting, like the God
we have missed
in the void's emptiness, out amongst the stars.

RAINING WHITE PETALS IN THE BREEZE

Raining white petals in the breeze
each leaf must fall and clothe the grass,
gentle as the summer's

hands, a slow and perfect shroud
so meek, so perfect in each blossom
felled by Time

that not a single tear is left
desolate upon the trees alone, but all shall
fall and be as one united
in the fall toward the mother earth
each has loved so well.

THE SHED

As I was passing green fields colour
of sea-wet stones in the broadest field
was a shed, time-worn of memory,
one window left, fragilely imperious
against the storms. For merest second
imagined myself dissolve away, days

eating like hungry maggots into me
and here stood the shed, lifeless, ruined,
gutted, yet survived, and that window,
shining brightly like an eye despite
splintering of grass or stones cast
upward by winds impotent in their rage;
survived.

Eventually I wrote my recollection down,
described rough shape of the building,
how it sagged to one side like a stroke

victim, not aware anything was wrong,
strong enough to still be standing there
in its ignorance gifted of a singular

desire to remain. That recollection I
destroyed, crime of youth, but here it all
comes flooding back again, window like
an unbroken eye, those fields colour
of sea-wet stones and if I could reach
out my hand imagine I could touch . . .

probably gone by now. Only words
remain to give solace their being and
the days eat on in splendour as I am
slowly rotted out, leaving but a single
unbroken eye.

THE BREATHLESS SUMMER

The breathless summer where aspen leaves still stir
like the imperfect things we were, even in the hollows
of spring remember what we were. The sparrows,
however, refuse to sing, and the soft slow perils
of being ourselves recall us into the memory of fir
trees, as if we were but the thoughts of fir or aspen
or oak or tamarisk . . . and I softly still condemned to pen
my life ahead, but all my thoughts return to her.
And who was she? I cannot recall. I remember hair
and eyes and the soft cool stares of her stares
on me, in that forest over there, that forest, where
the breathless summer was, and leaves still stir
like the people that we were in other lives, caged in a pen
and lines of ink, surrounded by pages once of aspen.

THE SHADOW OF A BIRD

The shadow of a bird passed over the sands.
From the long ago a child descended there, hands
gripping the larger beasts around, as if the lands
 of man were silent save for her.
 Of which of course they were.

The beasts allowed her to totter to the shoreline
and then black oxen and wolves would recline
and leave her in this wan acre where willows
dine and bend their listening bodies
over her. All else was silence then, mere shadows
 clasping each other in lands of fire
 until the world again becomes the pyre
 and shadowlands,
 oh, sweet shadowlands . . .
the shadow of a bird passed over the sands.

FROM THE FLOTSAM OF A CITY

(Taken from Nathalia Crane.)

From the flotsam of a city street sparrows screamed.
We cruised without compass through the city then.
Surf upon sandbars called the price of sugar cane.
Reflections upon the waters before us all dreamed.
 The portals of the earth gave way beneath.
Yet the glory of the ocean ceased to roll like men slain.
I heard the sparrows weeping as they screamed.
The portals of the earth grew tame and blunted.
Surf upon sandbars called the price of sugar cane.
From the flotsam of a city street sparrows screamed.
 The portals of the earth gave way beneath.
Yet the glory of the ocean ceased to roll like men slain.

ONE ROSE MAKES A GOWN

One rose makes a gown into a garden and one poem alike belongs to the dark and silent earth; and the earth that breeds trees and poems birth and breed cities too, and symphonies. The bright sun does not set on roses though, or poems, cities or symphonies. For what is a sun but a candle

flame illumining in an endless sea as one lone moment escapes into infinity. Our solitary earth is no more than a passing shade. The sun's worth is not made in setting or rising but being. Cities are not made in passing but in stationary stillness. Roses are not made to decay, but be. The sun's light

exists apart from the darkness and in that lone moment between existence and ending the earth remains a mystery. One rose can make the birth of gown to garden or one song unseat scandal of never writing a symphony thru that long night . . . and yet I wish I had composed that symphony.

WHERE VALLEYS FILL

Where valleys fill with the tenderness of trees
there is a little land where man may go.
Come when September ripples with the grain
and you may know, will know the passing rain
is sweet as a summer misspent of pain or sorrow.

Where valleys fill with the tenderness of trees
there is a little company among the foliage,
for nothing harms man less than another's age.

EDEN ONCE UPON A TIME

Eden once upon a time was mine you know.
It's true. I swear it. I used sometimes to go
into Eden where we dreamed . . . dreamed
and sometimes seemed alone. You seemed
alone at least, forgetting where our feet trod
and thinking me a stranger when eyes opened.
But I held Eden once in hand, like grains . . .
I will not betray the metaphor. You know
the grains I speak, as time bends low, and seemed
so quiet, ourselves like strangers lost on the road,
until you mentioned a serpent you knew in rains
and I mentioned where our lives began.

THE FIRST OF THE FAIR ONES

The first of the fair ones using indelible colours
lie in shadowy ideals of Eden, and still the hours
remain. I've grown tired of mirthless mirrors
and their hostile heresies though. Strange to say.
When I stare at myself, I am not there; no fair
reflection catches its sight upon me. The first
of the fair ones crafted Eden an instrument burst
forth without reflection. There was nothing
to compare it with, you see. Now that it is there
and we are here the fair ones can tell the day
and the night and the differences between. Seers
they've become, I guess. So, now hell's colours
softly shadow my face, leaving its reflection worse.

AND BLACK ENCIRCLING HILLS

And black encircling hills that hold the lamp
or purple hills of which no man may speak,
or the scarlet hills which roil like seas damp
with the blood of mariners; of these three I know.

And oceans mired and deep and full of beasts
that frighten men, or seas where the demons
dream, that have no thought of men, or feasts
the oceans make of ships; of these three I know.

And deserts, stained crimson athwart the dawn
or fields which smell of dry grass or sweet
frost autumn moonlight on the rim, or grey swan
forests whose branches are wings;
of these three I know.

And you? Of you what do I know who claims
her love of me, claims to love me as I love my own?

In time you'll pass to memory and shames
outgrown will still outgrow. Of you, I do not know.

THE PANTHER KNIGHT

The panther knight stalks lands we do not
know. Where he goes we have not gone, nor
can. His face is unseen, his battles fought

I witnessed not. His armour gleams or
it isn't so. His horse is dark, white or
has none at all. His sword is golden or

silver or has none. All that he is not
we are and as all we are is less than he
we know he is greater than us. We

know he is greater unseen and has fought
greater battles since we have fought less.
In the end, we go to paradise and rest.
Where he goes we have not answered yet.

THE VALLEY OF CEDARS

Valley of cedars, never come morning.
Darkness from air never left.

Sort of traitor this, night unending,
day succumbed to a suicide.

Though would day not be traitor then?

Hardly matters now. Who
will remember sun or seasons
or winter's passing or summer's tears?
Only valley and only if it is anything
more than stone

or earth's depression, hollowed by
an unceasing, uncaring alien hand.

JULLUNDUR

In the country of Jullundur vines
grow black, sing of past idol gods
like a bitter stone plague

and women wear a purple
dye about their eyes as they wait
for the heat to melt the sun and bring

on night as night herself
must silently die the same.

MEDUSA CUTS HER SERPENT HAIR

Medusa cuts her serpent hair
and with an acid peels away
the scales from off her face

till she looks like any woman I
have seen, trying so desperately
to be what she can never be,

lovely and beautiful even with
her scales and her serpent hair.

ULEXITE

Ulexite

 clear
eyes, yours,
hers,
soft as vinegar,
quick as sand,
 me
between, hunted
gaze, haunted,
yourselves
archers.

ACACALLIS

Sister of

 a minotaur,
her name was.
Find in burial plots
women like her,
 with brothers
too cursed to stain earth
by being laid rest,
 instead their
graves unfound are.
Only record of them
 is the loved ones
whose lives the worst of
 were.

THE TIDE

When the tide comes crashing
in it leaves me desolate, splinters all
I am, ruins me as a wave dark glinting
knifelike has its way into me
 and thru me like
 I was the ocean's road.

But then the tide recedes,
curls back on itself like smoke caught
on the wind, rolls back
on the storm of its own self
 and on the bare floor of the
ocean I glimpse the ghost of myself
 staring back at me, until the
 tide comes in again.

ARMADA OF THE SUN

Armada of the sun. Burning all
to twilight. And to dust, embers.
Sailing the void eternal.
 Themselves their own lighted
way. Each step perfected by.
Each movement excelled
upon. A hint of destruction.
 In every perfect act.
Still, they burn forever. Loneliness
their one watchword. Light
could not tell. Tell one from another.
 All light fixated upon.
 Itself in brief despair.

FOIRSAIHITE

I burn, and in the burning die,
finding each turn of my life leading to
a single black demise,

like Foirsaihte going off to war,
knowing his wounds
too sharp to dare endure.
But tomorrow though I burn
I will not die tomorrow.

THE SEA OF . . .

I will never again be of that
sea of humanity whose shore
is boundless,
whose reach is unending,
an ocean without a skin
of land to clothe
its boundary. I shall never
come upon that sea again when
I pass thru the veil to another sea,
another humanity,
but instead of water
fire.

ON READING HOUSEMAN'S
POEM XXVI

If my knife into my chest
I plunge and world and sky
dissolve and all souls

die who will remember me
for what I was, and will care
if world and sky dissolve? Not I.

TWO BECOME ONE

A dragonfly mating on a reed
by a still dark pool of water with
 another dragonfly,
two become one
 then break again,
becoming three, out on a reed
by a still dark pool,
 silent lovers by cold
pond listening to beasts
hunting all the while, for two
lovers and their child, for one
 become two become three.

HER HAUNTING EYES

Her haunting eyes halted me
by the road that skirts the bay.

Who are you?

Who are you?

By the road that skirts the bay
her haunting eyes halted me.

I am Death.

I am Death.

Her haunting eyes silenced me
by my grave beside the bay.

FROM WEARY EARTH

From weary earth to sapphire walls
the black, bleak December crawls her
fingers over us. The vision falls
as our last, lone breath stalls alone.

Upon seeds of a singular desire
sown in far silences, fire black
as days spent praying for the pyre,
our lives, last note lyre left, undone.

ARK ZERO

Ten thousand years collapsed to an afternoon.

As deities to deities we became.

We saved a memory or two of a world, a man,
a woman's smile, child's laughing eyes. Shame

there wasn't more to connect us to,

but in the end, we were just the

shepherds of lost countries, hidden so

thoroughly they were realms of sea

glass tossed to black seas,

invisible as dreams in dreams.

THE CITY OF THE END OF THINGS

I. Beside pounding cataracts
in paleness sought the secret there
of midnight streams unknown to us
 in leafless tracts
 like music in the air
and valleys huge of Tartarus
the place no rounded name shall ring
but I have heard it called
 The City of the End of Things.

II. Like flames of Carthage thrown
 her walls have sunk
and pyramids of fire
 in lurid splendour
from her domes aspire
whose iron towers now
 have grown.

III. None know how high within
the night of silent valleys
 clothed in infernal light
like a newborn burning flower
all regal in magnificent attire
 untameable by fate
the stalking shadows there.

IV. Only fire and night hold
sway over the daughters of the
 Seraphim,
 of isles crimsoned by
its beams, but I have heard
it called in dreams

from out a thousand furnace
doors the voiceless flourish
of eternal vales the eternal gates
over the seas of light
their ruin streams upon the face
of the abysses and
vast fires between.

V. The inhuman music lifts
and falls with measured
door and iron ring
a dreadful monotonous cry
like a faint cloud kindled by the
black dying sun
the gilded black butterfly
scarce and left to that
burning tomb and share
her children's martyrdom.

VI. The sun sets brightly while
glares the sky as when the desert's
red winds are high
through the sculptured altar
and pillared hall
where the eyes of martyred children
rise on the haunted air,
a glistening eye to the
poison of a smile save the silence
of the night where no wind
shall blow nor foot shall pass
save one the hand of time shall spare,
a grim idiot at the gates
of The City of the End of Things,
deathless and eternally waiting there.

IN THE DAWN OF THE CRIMSON HOUR

1) In the dawn of the crimson hour
I saw a woman in a crystal flower
over a blooming land untrod

I passed one day in reverie,
her body pressed on blossomed sod
beside a wine-dark coral sea.

2) So there upon the serpent path,
there upon the verdant floor
I took the flower and saw a door,
entering in felt an ecstasy, a sin
beside the venomous serpent's wrath
thru obsidian gates the shape
of ravens I have known in splendour
seemed, where shadows scream.

2) Thru the obsidian gates
I went listening as the spirit sings
while in the cradle of the surge
it swings along the
black-edged mountain stair neath
crimson sky vivid as the nights
which fly thru this sun-streaked
world of lies, this monument
built upon the air.

3) The mountain seemed a brief
wounded thing, a scar out along
the ancient side of some vast
monstrous beast, some
vast primordial beast,

and this I walked upon, below the
great red coral sea where sat
the demons at their feast, waiting
for my place
to be filled in their company.

4) Above I wandered till the sky
inverted and staring up the sea
I greeted, the seeming
splendour of the world in dreaming
through a crystal's prism
before passing into oblivion,
not knowing why.

5) No melody beneath the moon
to learn an empyrean rhyme
or watch the upper sea beside
the moon turned gold, scarlet
ringed 'bout its side,
falling like a teardrop in the flower
girl's eye.

6) The melancholy Tartarus,
the singed mosses curling here
crumbled to sparkling dust beneath
the burial sheet and sheath
of moths whose feathered wings
still beat at the great volcanic
strength whose cooling
remnant the mountain is, I walked
upon nor know the reason that I know
it was upon them I walked upon.

7) Summer-rest from earth riot,
with golden lip and glistening
bell even the black lusters of saffron
knots which our mortality tells
 slipped
a moment, and I found myself in hell.
The sea above was burning,
the crystal in my hand still turning,
 the woman screaming silently,
I listening wearily, and then
 tripped
back into my voyaging upward
 into the upper world.

8) Far away in autumn bone towns
there sits a scarecrow whose eyes
are rags and as the sun begins to set
into the western lands, it clutches
at black-soft sands, pretending
it sees or touches or recalls
the sound of a train whistling along
beyond the autumn town walls . . .
nothing is there though.
Even the scarecrow is but a piece of
my memory I grasp for in empty
company, and see with eyes as empty
as his own.

9) Swift as a sunshot dart of light
hundred-sunned Phoenix she makes
her nest nestled in the gold moon's
breast, and in those
reflected serpent-shrouded seas,
coral cutting

dry seabeds she waits for me,
this second prisoner of our mortalities,
swift as a sunshot dart of light
burning in the gardens of the night.

10) Her gorgeous deathbed, her rich
pyre burnt up with aromatic fire
 glassing the great sun in her eye
steadfast she gazed upon her own fire,
still her destroyer and her sire,
 that hundred-sunned Phoenix
upon whose moon country she retires,
for what fires are there which
 exist where there is no air?

11) The serpent-shrouded sea
above looked down on me and
I motionless
 seemed, like a scarecrow
hung upon the moors outside
some autumn town whose doors
were closed all
 against me. And
the coral bent her fingers to
me and gazing down they reached
up through me and I knew no peace
was mine to claim, so I upon
 the mountain then reclined.

12) On bluebell beds like
dulcimers that with shadeless
boughs flamed over me
 I watched the azure world
come to me, and glancing down,

my fingers closing over her prism-prison,
 realized my finger shadowed
her face from the sun.
So, I placed the gem beside me
and waited my end to come.

13) Neath that strange and savage
weather where shadows gleam, or
scream, the Phoenix sailed and
lost in dream inside of dream

 I imagined her a dragon,
her wings outstretched, a hunter
in the hunting place, but one of the
monolithic race, before her a knight
in armour gold charging at her,
arrogant and bold, his lance broken
'gainst her once wounded, now
scarred side, so like the mountain
on which I lied, before

 the Phoenix came to me, my
bayonet slung useless at my side.

14) The scarecrow's skin was
a ragged thing, his bones were
twigs children gathered before
passing into adulthood

 where dreams lie scattered,
 or shattered, and through his
senses, but a moment, I saw
the autumn bone town
 one last time.

15) There was no pain. I imagined
pain but divinity riddled on divinity

no pain came.

The sea receded its march to me
as the Phoenix embraced and my
fingertips brushed against her lips
in a burning haze

as if we stood upon
a burning plain there in the midst of
night and rain . . . there was no pain.

16) I awoke back upon the moor from
where I came before the flower I saw,
but the crystal was nowhere to be seen
at all.

All instead I found were some
scattered gem dust glittering briefly
in the sunlight as I drew it up in my hand
and let them fall back upon the sand.

The dark wine coral sea beside me
lay and curled its back upward toward
the crimson vivid sky

and in the distance the wounded
mountain still remained.

But she was gone, the woman and
her prism-prison . . . which I had assumed
it was.

About me was only the wide waste
of air unstirred by the voice of bee or bird.
Of nothing could I be sure

except when thinking upon her lips
my fingertips brushed against halfway
between the sea and sea. There was nothing
left to do or be and the serpent path
ahead I knew would recede

back to the countries my people

knew when life was fair and the world
was good, so I might take ease
and go that way and . . .

I paused and reclined beside the
wine dark coral sea, and let the sun
drown down upon her skin dark as saffron
or sable-bent, and did not relent or
move again until the sun returned to me.

Epilogue

Beside the serpent-shrouded seas,
coral cutting dry seabeds
 rested the long bled
fingerprints of the dead
embedded like the roots of trees.
On distant hill, the scarecrow hung,
his broken eyes but rags run
dry cast gazing in a
 summer-shrouded sky . . .